

**FOLLOW-UP INFORMATION FROM
SECRETARY OF EDUCATION
OPPORTUNITIES FOR CHANGE AND IMPROVEMENT
IN INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY INVESTMENTS**

Opportunities for Change and Improvement in Information Technology Investments Secretary of Education

Persuasion. The challenge is to bring together separately governed entities such that coordination and cooperation are viewed as an individual good as well as a collective good. We've made some progress in this area over the last several years. The most fruitful venue for these conversations is the group of college and university chief information officers, which meets periodically. The CIO at George Mason University, Dr. Joy Hughes, is the primary contact for that group. The ITIB (or staff) should meet with Dr. Hughes. Staff also should meet with Dr. Dan LaVista, director of the State Council of Higher Education, and encourage him (or his staff) to meet from time to time with Dr. Hughes. I also give credit to the work of the VITA Cabinet work groups. Those meetings have been surprisingly valuable and need to continue under the new administration.

Bricks and bytes. Information technology can help deliver educational services to underserved groups and help reduce the need for conventional investments, such as new buildings. On the K-12 side, we are expanding our "Virtual AP" school, which gives students across the state equal access to Advanced Placement courses. In higher education, there are opportunities for what's called "course transformation," whereby high demand courses are remade with technology. As a result, more students can be served with equal or greater learning outcomes. The most visible example of course transformation can be seen at the Virginia Tech Math Emporium. We are exploring other opportunities to use technology in such a way to reduce demands on other high-cost investments.

IT divide. We continue to infuse technology into our public schools and colleges, which seems to be the more prevalent way to address the digital divide. Public libraries also are on the front line of this issue. The Library of Virginia is undertaking a study of Virginia's public library system. Its findings may be helpful in determine what other steps we might want to consider.

Cross-cutting operational issues. The most obvious area in which information technology can bridge administrative functions in different segments of education is in data collection and analysis. We face many situations that require access to student data. Our current systems do not allow for easy transfer of information among school divisions, nor do they give us the ability to track students between high school and college. As far as sharing administrative information technology systems, the challenge is to find ways to remove undue administrative processes while leaving responsibility at the individual agency. We have been successful in limited ways with using common vendors or by providing training, but large-scale or more complex efforts have not been as fruitful.